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*Le Petit Pont**Charles Meryon*

### The Meryon Exhibition

MERYON'S etchings are shown in the Print Rooms, together with a selection of prints by noted etchers of earlier periods.

Charles Meryon is, at the present day, a name to conjure with, and it is scarcely necessary to dwell upon his powers when so much has been said, by men who know, about the artist and his art. Most of us will agree with the enthusiastic words of Victor Hugo: "These etchings are magnificent. . . . The breath of the universe breathes through all his prints, and makes these etchings more than pictures—visions." Visions they are, these "Eaux-fortes sur Paris," utterly removed beyond the numberless views which picture the Paris of the sightseeing tourist. Here are streets and bridges and edifices, indeed, but these constructions of stone and mortar have kindled the artist's soul. To him they are the silent witnesses of a glorious past, time-hallowed and beautiful; his genius responds to their inspiration, and conscientiously he depicts them, as he would draw a venerable portrait. If their impressiveness seems to suffer, as seen from one view-point, he blends two sketches—as in the "Petit Pont" here shown (Case 15), where the church is drawn from a higher elevation, raised, magnified,

till it has gained sufficient prominence. The "Pont Neuf" (Case 11) offers another instance of blended sketches, the later impression showing a return from poetry to a duller realism. Finally, in the great "Stryge" (Cases 17 and 18) the distance is shifted for utmost effectiveness, the figure turned the least bit round, gloating—an incarnation of evil—as it beholds its harvest in the city below. These glimpses of Paris are themes about which his fevered imagination plays and sparkles, peopling the somber Morgue (Case 12) with adequate figures, and sometimes introducing elements which all too plainly denote an unsound mind. If smile we must, at his balloons and flying fish and celestial figures, let it be a smile of pity for his misfortune, which hung, a heavy presentiment, over his life, imparting that note of gloom which pervades his prints. Several impressions are shown in many instances to show Meryon's ceaseless striving for perfect expression; this is, perhaps, most clearly apparent in the four impressions of his wonderful "Pont au Change" (Cases 7 and 8), where changes are made again and again in bridge and distance, aside from the strange variations in the heavens. Five of the prints, fine early impressions,\* have been kindly lent by private collectors in order to fill some painful gaps in the Museum collection.

Passing into the second Print Room, we find examples of the work of Zeeman, whose Paris views inspired Meryon; other Dutch prints, akin in subject to Meryon's plates, have been grouped about them in Cases 19–22. Next come the spacious, spirited "Carceri" of Piranesi, all loans, as well as his grand presentations of triumphal arches and other heirlooms of antiquity, splendid in their decorative quality. Strongly contrasting with these bold, big plates are the conscientious, accurate renderings of famous sites in London, etched by the Bohemian Wenzel Hollar (Cases 31–34), whose fine "Antwerp Cathedral" will

\* Note the soft, harmonious perfection of the first "Stryge" in Case 17; the clearness of detail, not yet overworked, in the "Ministere de la Guerre" just below in lower Case 17; and the rich brilliancy of the first "Rue des Toiles" in Case 14.

*Ponte Salaria**Piranesi*

be found in Case 35. Callot justifies his great reputation by animated scenes of festive Paris, most interesting for comparison in many ways, especially the two views of the Seine, upstream and down, both brilliant impressions, both loans (Cases

What contrasts, indeed, between Carrière and Besnard, Cottet and La Touche, Jacques Blanche and Raffaelli, René Ménard and Walter Gay, De la Gandara and Lepère, Lucien Simon and Aman-Jean, Dauchez and Desvallières, Henri



36 and 37). Finally there is Canaletto, with his spacious "Prà della Valle" (Case 36), and other prints filling the end wall with the sunlight and breeze of the Veneto, so well suggested by his crisp strokes of the etching needle. E. H. R.

### The Exhibition of French Art

On March 8 an exhibition of works of members of the Société de Peintres et de Sculpteurs of Paris, including in all one hundred and sixty-six pictures and sculptures, was opened in the Museum. The collection was originally brought to America through the friendly offices of Miss Cornelia B. Sage. It is a fact of interesting significance that at the same time a room was opened in the Musée du Luxembourg to be devoted exclusively for some months to works of American artists which have been acquired by the French government. Although French artists are in great majority in the Boston exhibition, other nationalities are not without representatives. These, however, have all lived and worked in Paris, and so the collection may fairly be called an exhibition of French art.

It reflects quite satisfactorily the present tendencies of artists in Paris, since this group includes only the works of persons in the mature vigor of their talent, between the older masters whose glory belongs to yesterday and the young artists who will perhaps be attaining it to-morrow. Visitors have been especially struck with the variety of styles and techniques shown in the collection. France, however, has undergone enough revolutions in the domain of art during the last century and more to allow her artists the enjoyment of complete liberty.

Martin and Prinnet, Morrice and Emile Claus, Baertsoen and Sargent, Ulmann or Duhem and Alexander; and among the sculptors, between Rodin and Prince Troubetzkoy, Bourdelle or Lagare and Mlle. Poupelet! This great variety must be regarded as one of the characteristics of French art, and its chief originality. Almost every *genre* is represented here, including historic landscape in the paintings of René Ménard and the story or the fantasy in the work of Gaston La Touche. Nevertheless, there are none of those historic reconstructions in which the romantic school was so lavish, nor are there any religious subjects, although the piety of the Breton peasants is forcibly expressed in the canvases of Cottet and La Touche. There is no less diversity in technique. Henri Martin, Emile Claus, Le Sidaner rely upon *pointillisme*; Simon, Besnard, and Blanche have a broad, energetic manner, while Aman-Jean is more timid; Carrière, neglecting the color of objects, seeks subtlety of modelling and delicacy of atmosphere, while La Touche, on the other hand, expresses all the gaiety of natural color. Each artist, in short, creates a technique adapted to his temperament.

This variety in style, in *genre*, in medium of expression, will not, it is hoped, prove only a subject of surprise to visitors of the French exhibition. We should be glad if the young students of art in Boston have found the opportunity to interest themselves in such a collection. May they learn that there are as many ways of seeing, of conceiving and expressing things of nature and of life as there are men, or at least as many as there are poets and artists.

J. G.